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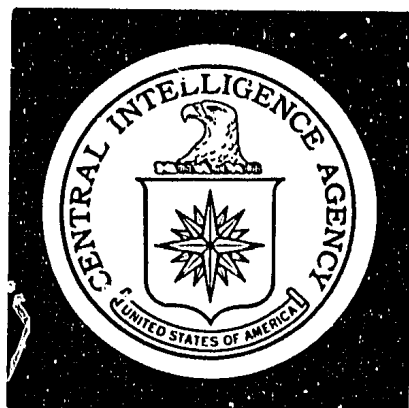
CIA/OCI/IM -1467/70

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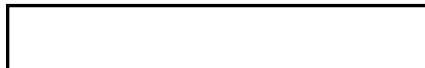
# Intelligence Memorandum

*Nasir's Death: The Immediate Aftermath*

**Secret**

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29 September 1970  
No. 1467/70



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
29 September 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Nasir's Death: The Immediate Aftermath

Problems of Succession

1. Nasir's death leaves a political vacuum in Egypt that will be difficult to fill. Egypt's provisional constitution states that if the president dies, the first vice president assumes power until a new president is chosen. Of late, Egypt has had only one vice president, Anwar Sadat, and he has been appointed interim president. Sadat was recently reported to be under a political cloud, but he has been a perennial figurehead in the Egyptian Government and has held a great variety of posts since participating with Nasir in the "free officers" movement that ousted King Farouk in 1952. His performance over the years has not been particularly outstanding, however; he owed his position more to his loyalty to Nasir than to his political strength or acumen. Sadat is an ardent nationalist who is reported to be strongly opposed to domestic Communism, but he realizes the value of both political and military aid from the USSR. Like many Egyptian politicians, he is probably more opportunistic or pragmatic than ideologically motivated. He is said to have opposed Egypt's acceptance of the US peace initiative.

2. Sadat does not appear to carry much personal weight in Egyptian political circles, and it is doubtful that he will fill the presidency for more than an interim period. There are no other Egyptian political or military figures, however, who have sufficient stature to be in the running as a clear-cut successor to Nasir. It seems likely, therefore, that for the short term a figurehead

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president will be chosen, leaving decision-making in the hands of the group of advisers who comprised Nasir's inner circle.

3. Included in this group are Minister of State Sami Sharaf, who has also been chief of presidential intelligence; Minister of National Guidance Muhammad Haykal; Minister of Interior Sharawi Jumah; and Amin Huwaydi, who is currently a minister of state but until recently was chief of general intelligence. There is thought to have been some rivalry among these men, and, although they all seemed to share a common loyalty to Nasir, it is not clear whether or for how long they will bury their differences in order to preserve the political stability that Egypt has enjoyed since the early 1950s. The active military leadership cannot be ignored in this period of transition, however, and whoever eventually emerges on top will need at least the tacit blessing of the armed forces.

4. There are a number of other men who might swing some weight in the struggle for power that even now will have begun behind the scenes. Muhammad Fawzi, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, is not thought to have any particular political ambitions, but his influence with the military will be important. Other generals may hope to play a role in post-Nasir Egypt. Civilians who may be involved in political maneuvering include Minister of State Muhammad Faiq, former vice president Zakariya Muhyeddin, and National Defense council member Ali Sabri. The final outcome of this period of flux cannot be predicted, however, and some relatively obscure figures could eventually emerge on top, even as Nasir himself did, possibly as a result of a military grab for power.

#### Soviet Reaction

5. A high-ranking delegation led by Premier Kosygin and including Deputy Foreign Minister Vinogradov and Deputy Defense Minister Zakharov will attend Nasir's funeral. The death of Soviet Ambassador Sergei Vinogradov in Cairo only a month ago may hamper Soviet assessments of the situation in Cairo. Moscow may try to compensate by leaving Cairo a high-level member of the delegation, perhaps the deputy foreign minister, to protect Soviet interests for the time being.

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6. The Soviets will be gravely worried about their long-run position in Egypt. They will play their cards in a fashion calculated to protect this stake, subordinating short-run concerns to their effort to find and back a new leadership that promises enduring value to Soviet interests.

#### Israeli Reaction

7. The death of Israel's long-time enemy has evoked a tinge of regret and concern for the future in Jerusalem, but most senior officials have expressed some basic satisfaction. They long regarded the Egyptian president as the primary obstacle among Arab leaders both to the undisturbed occupation of the Arab territories they now hold and to an acceptable peace settlement. They flatly rejected Nasir's professions of peaceful intent and were convinced that he was devoted to the eventual extermination of Israel as a state. They were highly frustrated by Nasir's resilience in the wake of two massive defeats at their hands and can only rejoice in his departure. A major aim of Israel's Arab policy was the downfall of Nasir, and the deep penetration air raids around Cairo early this year were a new tactic to achieve that end.

8. The Israelis were convinced then--and are now--that "things could only be better" in the Middle East and for Israel if Nasir were eliminated. They have argued that a successor regime, which they expect to be a military group or a civilian front dominated by the military, would be so preoccupied with maintaining power and so engrossed in domestic problems that it would be ineffective in foreign policy and military action. They recognized that Nasir's external influence had waned, but they still viewed him as the most influential man in the Arab world. In the Israeli view, Nasir provided what mortar there was among the Arab states; with him gone, they expect considerable disarray and a further decline in inter-Arab cooperation that will be reflected on political, diplomatic, and military fronts. Some Israeli newspapers hopefully predict that no Arab leader of Nasir's stature will emerge for ten years. Israel will closely

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watch developments in Egypt, but seems unlikely to initiate any military action there to exploit the period of confusion. Although Israeli officials might see some military advantages in moving against Egypt, during its moment of distraction, they probably regard the political disadvantages of such action now as overriding.

#### Arab Reactions

9. Like the Egyptians, most of the other Arab leaders are likely to maintain a respectful silence on the succession question until the dust has settled, but the centrifugal forces in the Middle East will be accelerated without Nasir's stabilizing influence. Libya's Qaddafi fancies himself to be cut from the Nasir mold and he has received flattering attentions because of his country's new-found wealth, but the kind of leadership he could provide would be largely oratorical. Syria's President Atasi and Iraq's Bakr are probably not masters of their own houses, and are too preoccupied with internal problems and ideological disputes to be serious contenders for a leadership role in the Middle East.

10. King Husayn of Jordan and King Faysal of Saudi Arabia may be drawn closer together as a result of Nasir's demise, because both see themselves threatened by radical forces during the period of uncertainty ahead. Nasir's dying in the midst of strenuous efforts to deal with Israel and the West and to quell the fighting in Jordan could also result in a mindless lashing out by the Arab populace against his supposed tormentors; e.g., the chances of an assassination attempt on Husayn are perhaps heightened by the increased emotionalism among the Palestinians. Western institutions in the Middle East and Israeli interests everywhere offer convenient targets for violent catharsis. Extremist Palestinians would be the groups most likely to succumb to such an emotional reaction; they might react more violently elsewhere, however, than in Jordan. The Palestinian movement generally will have an ambivalent reaction; a restraining force will have been removed, but also gone is a unifying personality who in some measure symbolized "the cause."

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11. Nasir's death will seriously complicate Middle East peace efforts, but its precise effect may not be clear for some time. At least at the outset, the new Egyptian leadership will probably be preoccupied with domestic political concerns and will not be eager--nor perhaps able--to explore new approaches to the Arab-Israeli problem. Even if they were, they do not command Nasir's authority in Egypt or in the Arab world and would have trouble making an agreement stick.

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Nasir's successors are, however, more likely to let existing situations alone than to take new and possibly divisive steps; this circumstance would act in favor of an extension of the present 90-day cease-fire that expires in early November.

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